

# **SPEEDWAY TERRACE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

## **Design Review Guidelines**

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## Map of the Speedway Terrace Historic District Boundaries



### Article 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Goals of the Speedway Terrace Historic District

This document presents Design Guidelines for the Speedway Terrace Historic District in Memphis, Tennessee. The intent of these guidelines is to ensure that all exterior new construction, habitable additions, demolition and relocation within Speedway Terrace is in character with the neighborhood's existing fabric. Design Review Guidelines provide the Memphis Landmarks Commission (MLC) with basic criteria and standards to consider in determining the appropriateness of proposed work within the District.

A renewed spirit of community and connection to history has been triggered by the redevelopment of the Sears, Roebuck and Company regional distribution warehouse (on the south border of Speedway Terrace) into what is known today as the Crosstown Concourse. With inevitable future development and revitalization of the surrounding areas, the goal is that future changes do not detract from the neighborhood's unique and original character.

#### 1.2 The Memphis Landmarks Commission

Pursuant to Section 26-70 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Memphis, the Memphis Landmarks Commission (hereafter referred to as MLC or the Commission) was established to protect, enhance and perpetuate structures, districts and elements in the city of historical, cultural, architectural and geographic significance. The MLC consists of nine members, all appointed by the City Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.

The MLC is given the authority to determine the appropriateness of new construction within a Historic District. Appropriateness of work must be determined in order to accomplish the

following goals of historic zoning, and is outlined in the guidelines and bylaws of the Memphis Landmarks Commission:

1. To promote the educational, cultural and economic welfare of the people of Memphis.
2. To preserve and protect the historical and architectural value of buildings, other structures, or historically significant areas,
3. To ensure the compatibility within the Historic District by regulating exterior designs, arrangement, texture and materials,
4. To create an aesthetic appearance which complements the historic buildings or other structures,
5. To stabilize and improve property values,
6. To foster civic beauty and community pride,
7. To strengthen the local economy,
8. To establish criteria and procedures to regulate the construction, relocation, demolition or other alteration of structures and appurtenances within any Historic District or zone; and
9. To promote the use of Historic Districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the present and future citizens of Memphis.

### **1.3 Application of the Design Guidelines**

As a means to protect the unique character of the neighborhood, the Design Review Guidelines apply only to the exteriors of buildings and to areas of lots visible from the public right-of-way. They provide a common basis for making decisions about work that may affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of the neighborhood. These guidelines define a range of appropriate responses to a given design issue. This approach does not require residents to replicate historic buildings, but the guidelines are a means to help construction activity more closely relate to the placement, form and character of historic buildings.

The guidelines are employed in two formal ways:

1. First, MLC Staff will use the guidelines when advising property owners in administrative reviews and making recommendations to the MLC.
2. Second, the Commission will use the guidelines when considering the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

\*Please note that the Office of Construction Code Enforcement will not issue a construction permit without a COA from the MLC. Projects that need a COA include:

- a. New construction of house or secondary buildings
- b. Additions or enclosures that expand habitable space.
- c. Building Relocation
- d. Building Demolition
- e. Fences and Walls
- f. New or Altered Driveways and Parking Pads
- g. Retaining Walls

Property owners, real estate agents, developers, contractors, tenants and architects should use the design guidelines when planning for a project within the neighborhood. Such use will help establish an appropriate direction for its design.

### **1.4 Brief Description and History of Speedway Terrace**

The Speedway Terrace Neighborhood, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places 1998, is composed of approximately 21 blocks, 373 plats and 1100 acres in Midtown Memphis, TN. The Districts' boundaries are in line with the boundaries of the Speedway Terrace National Historic District as recorded in the National Registration of Historic Places. The District is roughly bound by North Watkins Avenue on the east, the back-property lines along the north side of Snowden Avenue, the right of way for Interstate 240 North on the west, and the back-property lines along the south side of Forrest Avenue and North Parkway where it borders Tower Avenue. These boundaries have been established by a consensus-level determination of eligibility between the Tennessee Historical Commission and The Tennessee Department of Transportation.

The majority of the structures in the district are single-family residences, although the area does contain multifamily dwelling units and several churches.

The Speedway Terrace neighborhood is significant for its architecture and community planning. It is a notable and substantially intact collection of middle-income residences built in Memphis during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

The most intensive development of the neighborhood began in 1905 and concluded in 1945, when the area had achieved most of its present density, order and character. Developers provided many of the amenities that have become standard in modern community planning. Practices, such as hierarchical lot sizes and setbacks that relate to the width of an individual street, create a strong sense of spatial order and coherence.

The development and construction of Memphis' Parkway System started in 1904, under the direction of George Kessler. A rectangular border was created around the city using existing streets. The north-lining avenue was known as the Speedway and is what is considered today to be North Parkway. Kessler had originally designed portions of the parkways to be tree-lined avenues where car and carriage owners could race against each other. Today, Speedway Terrace, along the area of North Parkway near Watkins serves as a reminder of the parkway's racing past. Initial development of Speedway Terrace was considered one of the largest real estate ventures of the time. The developers consisted of major figures in the creation of Midtown Memphis, including Finley Faxon and Robert Brinkley Snowden. The middle-class neighborhood was formed in part for "the encouragement of immigration, the locating, establishing and building of towns and cities" during a period of rapid expansion in Memphis.

In the 1920s, continued development as a residential neighborhood was spurred along by three nearby developments: the extension of North Parkway to connect with the downtown district, the relocation of Southwestern College to a new site on North Parkway, and the construction of the massive Sears, Roebuck and Company regional distribution warehouse at the south edge of the neighborhood. In 1920, notable early twentieth century home builder, William Cullen Chandler, developed a grouping of homes dubbed "Built-Rite" bungalows on Forrest Avenue. Their construction and detailing became the quality standard for other builders to emulate and aspire to as they competed with Chandler's houses within the subdivision. Most development of Speedway Terrace was completed by 1929.

### 1.5 Predominant Neighborhood Architectural Styles






1. Colonial Revival
2. Craftsmen
3. Minimal Traditional
4. Tudor Revival
5. Bungalow
6. Four Square
7. English Cottage
8. Shotgun Variation

Modified Center Hall Plan  
Colonial Revival Influence



Double-Pile Cottage  
Craftsmen and Tudor Revival Influence



<p>Double-Pile Cottage Minimal Traditional Influence</p> 	<p>English Cottage Tudor Revival Influence</p> 
<p>Bungalow Craftsman Influence</p> 	<p>Four Square Colonial Revival Influence</p> 
<p>Shotgun Variation Colonial Revival Influence</p> 	

## Article 2: Design Guidelines for New Construction of Single Family Homes and Secondary Structures

### 2.1 Basic Principles for New Construction

New construction includes the construction or erection of any freestanding structure or improvement on any lot. This includes new construction that uses existing walls and additions to existing buildings. These are subject to review by the Commission pursuant to the Landmarks Ordinance. This review applies only to the exterior of buildings and any other structure visible from the public right of way.

New construction should remain consistent with other buildings along a street in mass, scale, setback, rhythm and other design characteristics. More weight should be given to compatibility with other existing structures that are products and original to the historic period of construction of the immediate area. The principal façade and the street related elevations should be reviewed more carefully than other façades.

In determining the appropriateness of proposed new construction, the Commission should consider the compatibility and consistency of the proposed design of the new construction with the designs of existing building in terms of the following characteristics:

### 2.2 Building Orientation and Setbacks and Rhythm of Spacing

All new construction should be consistent in site, orientation, setbacks from the side and front property lines of the immediate surrounding properties and should maintain the rhythm and spacing of the existing landscape

#### 2.2.1 Building Mass, Scale and Form

New construction should be compatible with neighboring structures in regards to

building mass, scale and form. Structures should be construed to the same number of stories, to a compatible height and be built on a foundation of no less than two feet above grade. The mass of a new building should also be compatible to surrounding structures in size in relation to open spaces.

### **2.2.2 Proportion and Rhythm of Openings**

The relationship of width to height of windows and doors and the rhythm of solids to voids in the new building should be compatible with the surrounding structures.

### **2.2.3 Architectural Details**

The use of architectural details that add visual interest to the street are encouraged, as well as contemporary interpretations of these historic styles. The imitation or exact copying of older historic styles is discouraged as this blurs the distinction between the old and the new.

#### **2.2.3.a. Principle Compatibility with Surrounding Structures**

Principle façades should be compatible with adjacent buildings and the front of the structure should be oriented to the public street. The primary entrance should be clearly defined.

Windows, doors, openings and porches should also be visually compatible with surrounding structures. Roof shapes should also relate to the surrounding roof structures.

All new home construction must include an appropriate single car width driveway extending to the rear of the structure. Any excess parking should be to the rear and out of the public right of way.

#### **2.2.3.b. Exterior building materials**

Exterior building materials should be consistent with surrounding structures and other historic properties in the neighborhood. Frequently used materials include brick, limestone, stucco, and clapboard siding. The use of a mixture of two or three of these materials is encouraged. Vinyl and aluminum siding should be avoided. New materials that are similar in character to traditional materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing. In order to keep consistency within any structure which may fall outside of these guidelines before the creation of the district, the Commission may allow an alternative method of construction to keep the design and/or materials in align with the principle structure of the property.

#### **2.2.3. c. Porches**

Porches are a common feature on homes within the district and they are strongly encouraged. Porches should be functional, but not as a means to increase habitable living space. Porch elements should be similar to those traditionally seen. Porch elements which define entries, columns, posts and brackets contribute to the sense of character of the street and add visual interest.

#### **2.2.3. d. Chimneys**

Chimneys also provide visual interest and are encouraged. Commonly used materials are brick, stone and stucco. Wood, wood substitutes, metal and stucco with wood trim should be avoided.

## **Article 3. Design Guidelines for Additions**

### **3.1 Basic Principles for an Addition**

Additions to the exterior of a historic building should be designed and constructed so the character and defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged or destroyed in the process. Additions to the principal façade should be discouraged. Additions should be located to the rear of the principle structure and not overwhelm the original structure in mass or scale.

Enclosures of porches, porches and other covered areas of a principal façade to increase habitable space are inappropriate and should be avoided. If such closure is permitted it should preserve the original character of the principle façade.

Rooftop additions must be kept subordinate to the principle building in mass and scale

and set back from the front of the building. The roof form of new additions should be in character with and subordinate to that of the primary building to avoid changes in the principle facade.

### **3.2 Outbuildings and Appurtenances**

Garages, carports and storage facilities should be compatible in height and scale of the principal building. These structures should be placed at or towards the rear of the principle building on the lot.

New appurtenances, including driveways, sidewalks, fences and walls should be visually compatible with surrounding buildings and the sites in which they relate.

#### **3.2.1 Driveways and Parking Pads**

Driveways and parking pads should be made of materials comparable with surrounding structures, of single car width, and located to the side, extending to the rear of the principle building. Paving the front of a lot or increasing a parking pad into a majority of the area in front of a principle structure is deemed inappropriate and should be discouraged. Front yard parking is not appropriate and shall not be allowed. Adjacent driveways should not be combined to create broad expanses of concrete in the front yard. Additions or alterations to existing driveways which would increase or change the existing footprint must conform to these guidelines

#### **3.2.2 Fencing**

Fences should be of common materials and located to the side and backyards to keep the character of the neighborhood open and friendly. Rear yard fences or walls should be no more than 8' in height and constructed of traditional materials.

Fencing in a front yard is strongly discouraged, but if it is accepted, it should be no more than 3 1/2' and should be open to allow the principle structure to be in the public right of view. Front yard fences are preferred to be of natural materials and compatible with the rhythm and characteristic of the surrounding properties. Chain link, vinyl/plastic, precast concrete panels and plain concrete block are among the other materials that are not appropriate.

Fencing along the street of corner lots should be appropriate in height and material. Corner lot fencing should not exceed six feet (6') in height, should be front-facing and should be set back a minimum of three feet (3') from the sidewalk. Fencing along the public side yard of corner lot houses should begin toward the back of the structure so that the side facade is not obscured from view.

Because a corner lot fence may block the view, visibility triangles for vehicular traffic are required by codes. Consult with the City of Memphis Engineering Department for more information.

### **3.3 Other Site Improvements**

Construction of permanent freestanding signage or lighted signage for the purpose of advertising is inappropriate and should be avoided.

Freestanding or pole mounted satellite dishes (24" or larger) should be placed in inconspicuous locations to the public rights-of-view.

Decorative yard items such as benches, fountains, trellises, arches, lighting, landscaping or décor are not considered permanent structures and are not included in the review process.

## **Article 4. Design Guidelines for Demolition and Relocation of Principle Structures out of a District**

### **4.1 Basic Principles for Demolition and Relocation**

Since the purpose of historical zoning is to protect historic properties, the demolition of any principle structure which contributes historically or architecturally to the character and significance of a District is considered to be inappropriate and should be avoided. Demolition includes the complete or partial tearing down of such structure or a removal of such structure from the District. Should the Commission approve a proposed demolition, such demolition can proceed after an immediate reuse is determined for the property. The proposed design of new construction should be submitted to and reviewed by the Commission in conjunction with submission and review of the demolition or removal from the District.

Removal of such structure from a District shall be considered and reviewed as a demolition.

## **4.2 Criteria for Determining Appropriateness of Demolition**

Demolition or removal is inappropriate:

1. If a principle structure is deemed to be of such historical or architectural interest and value that the removal would be detrimental to the public interest and the goals of historic zoning.
2. If the proposed reuse and new construction would diminish or detract from the predominantly single family residential character of the District.
3. If a principle structure is of such old or unusual or uncommon design and materials that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty and expense.
4. If its proposed replacement or lack thereof would in the Commissions reasonable discretion make a less positive visual contribution to the District, would disrupt the District's character or would be visually incompatible.

Demolition or removal is appropriate:

1. If a principle structure has lost its architectural and historical integrity and importance and its removal and the proposed new construction will not in the Commissions reasonable discretion result in a negative, or less appropriate visual effect on the District.
2. If a principle structure does not contribute to the historical and architectural character of the District and its removal and the proposed new construction will in the Commissions reasonable discretion result in a more positive and appropriate visual effect on the District
3. If the Commission determines that demolition or removal is economically necessary and justified in accordance the provisions of the Landmarks Ordinance, the applicable guidelines of the Commission (to the extent they are more exacting) and other applicable governmental laws ordinances and regulations.
4. If the demolition is required by a final and a non-appealable order or ruling by a court, governmental body or agency that has jurisdiction. And such order or ruling does not allow for the restoration or continued use of the applicable structure.

## **Article 5. Design Guidelines for Relocation within a District or Site**

Moving a principle structure that still retains its historical and architectural integrity and contributes to the character of the District should be avoided.

Moving a building that does not contribute to the architectural and historical integrity of the District or has its architectural integrity due to deterioration and neglect is appropriate if its removal or the proposed replacement will result in a more positive visual effect on the District.

### **5.1 Criteria to Determine Appropriateness of Relocation**

A principle structure may be relocated within a District if:

1. The integrity of location and setting of the principle structure in its original location has been lost or is seriously threatened.
2. The structure will be compatible with the buildings adjacent to the new site in style height scale materials and setback.
3. The relocation of a principle structure, at the Commission's reasonable discretion, will not result in a negative visual impact on the site and surrounding buildings from which it will be removed.

## **Article 6. Design Guidelines for Religious, Educational or Other Institutional Buildings**

### **6.1 New Construction and Additions**

New institutional construction or additions should be compatible to the historic portions of the existing building and compatible to the historic character of the neighborhood. Impact on adjacent properties should be avoided and significant front and side setbacks from nearby single-family homes should be used.

### **6.2 Institutional Expansion**

Expansion should minimize its impact on surrounding historic resources. Surface parking should be included in new construction and placed to the rear of new and existing properties. Parking areas should be located to the interior of the lot where feasible.



Parking areas should be screened from view of public ways and adjacent properties with landscaping buffers using a combination of trees, shrubs and low walls as appropriate. Demolition of adjacent structures to create parking lots should be avoided regardless of the buildings historic or architectural significance. The preceding guidelines for new construction of and additions to new structures should be applied to all religious, educational or institutional buildings to the extent feasible.

## **Article 7: Miscellaneous**

**7.1** These guidelines should take effect on the date this District is designated a Historic District by the Memphis City Council. Upon such date, all property owners within the District and all who shall thereafter become property owners within the District shall be presumed to have knowledge of the provisions of these guidelines and shall be subject to the provisions of these guidelines.

**7.2** If any provision of these guidelines is made void or unenforceable by legislation or adjudication, such provision shall be deemed severed. The remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

**7.3** These guidelines may be amended from time to time as future needs require upon:

- (1) application by any person owning a legal or beneficial interest in any district property;
- (2) mailed written notice to all owners of property in the district; and
- (3) approval by the Landmarks Commission and any other governmental body required by applicable law in a public hearing.

**7.4** These guidelines do not apply to ordinary repairs and maintenance. Ordinary repairs and maintenance shall be deemed to include, without limitation, work to correct deterioration, decay or damage to a building, object, structure, or site in order to restore the same, as nearly as may be practical, to its condition prior to such deterioration, decay, or damage, using materials accepted within these guidelines. It also includes any work that replaces something in a “same for same” fashion without any alterations.

**7.5** Any alteration or improvement to any property within this district that is not explicitly subject to review in these guidelines is not required to apply for a COA. Items within this include, but are not limited to screened-in porches, window or door replacement, security windows and bars, and nonpermanent decorative yard items.

Information concerning design review guidelines, deadlines and applications for Certificates of Appropriateness can be found on the Shelby County government website:  
<https://shelbycountyttn.gov/389/Memphis-Landmarks-Commission>

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